WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 OCTOBER 1985

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

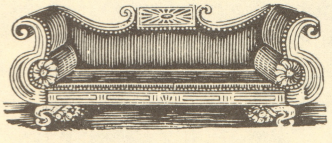
CALENDARS ON SALE GET YOURS NOW!

WCHS's attractive 1986 calendars featuring drawings of historic buildings around the county by Bill Shurtliff, local artist, are on sale at meetings and from President Galen Wilson or Vice-President Esther Warzynski, or Kempf House, 312 South Division.

To pick up a calendar call Wilson at 764-2347 or Kempf House, 996-3008 (both during office hours) or Mrs. Warzynski, 662-6275. They are $6 to members, $7 to the public or by mail. Send check or money order to. WCHS Calendar, Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

KEUHNLE NAMED CURATOR

Gary B. Kuehnle, WCHS director and professional antique appraiser, has been appointed curator of collections. Also on the collections committee are John Dann, Jim Parker and Galen Wilson, curator last year who drew up the collections policy adopted last spring.



MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN NAMED, TOWLER RESIGNS

Pauline Walters, a history major in college who works at the University of Michigan, has been appointed membership chairman of WCHS and a director-at-large, 1985-87.

Director Terry Towler of Ypsilanti, whose term expires next June, has resigned because of the press of other duties.

SHOULD WCHS EXPLORE MUSEUM POSSIBILITIES NOW? LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE WANTS YOUR INPUT

What should the Washtenaw County Historical Society's goals and priorities be? Should it be a museum/office/home? Should a museum committee be appointed to explore museum possibilities? Or should the Society involve itself in other projects?

A long-range planning committee has been meeting this summer to review the history of the Society and consider these questions. Now the committee wants to hear from you, the membership, at the November 14 meeting or by mail or phone.

A fall potluck supper is planned at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, November 14, at the Christian Reformed Church, 1717 Broadway. Following dinner, the long range planning committee will make a preliminary report and open the floor for discussion.

Please put on your thinking cap and let us know your thoughts. At least, please answer the simple yes-no survey question coupon on page 5 and send or bring it to the meeting.

James Parker is chairman of the committee called together by President Galen Wilson. Other members are Patricia Austin, John Dann, Elizabeth Dusseau, Gary Kuehnle, Louisa Pieper, David Pollock, Kathleen Sutton, Dalys Vogel, Esther Warzynski, and Alice Ziegler.

Additional members will be welcomed.

DEAN BIDLACK TO TALK ABOUT ELISHA, MARY ANN RUMSEY, ANN ARBOR'S LESSER KNOWN CO-FOUNDERS

Dr. Russell E. Bidlack, dean-emeritus of the U-M School of Library Science, will talk about "The Short and Troubled Lives of Elisha W. and Mary Ann Rumsey," at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, October 17, at the Ann Arbor American Legion.

Ann Arbor, Washtenaw's county seat, was co-founded by the Allens and the Rumseys. Less is known about the Rumseys than about John and Ann Allen.

Dr. Bidlack, a past WCHS president, researched and wrote *John Allen and the Founding of Ann Arbor,* (Bulletin No. 12, Michigan Historical Collections, 1962). He spoke about Ann Allen at the Society's 125th anniversary party in 1982.

Now he will share what he has discovered about the Rumseys.

The talk is open to the public free of charge. Refreshments will be served. Free parking. Handicap accessible at the front door.

Please note: meeting dates vary this year between Sunday afternoons and weeknights so that those who can't come at one time may come another.

KEMPF HOUSE OPEN

Ann Arbor's Kempf House, 312 South Division, will be open 1-4 p.m. Sundays through November 24. Front hall has been restored to Greek Revival style. Now handicap accessible.

'WHAT IS IT?' GAME AVAILABLE TO SCHOOLS

WCHS offers a traveling exhibit of small artifacts set up as a humorous "What is it?" game for children to schools.

It is available for school classes, subject to time and volunteer availability. For information call Patricia Austin, 663-5281.

WORLD HEADQUARTERS IN YPSI DEPOT TOWN

The world headquarters of the Hudson-Terraplane Antique Auto Club is at 100 East Cross Street in Ypsilanti's Depot Town near the railroad tracks, according to the September *Heritage News* of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation.

Jack Miller, club president, operates Miller Motor Sales there as well as collects historic cars and memorabilia. Tom Conway also has a historic vehicle collection in the old fire station up the street.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN AT HOME IN ANN ARBOR

When Cornelius L. Tuomy bought his 200-acre farm on the north Ypsilanti road in the 1870's it was well outside Ann Arbor and the only house on it was a small Greek Revival structure.

Today, the city sprawls far beyond it toward Ypsilanti, the farm is all built up to houses and other buildings, but the little house still stands although you might not recognize it.

It is incorporated into the large Italianate frame house at 2117 Washtenaw not far from the intersection with Stadium Boulevard. Now known as Tuomy House, it is headquarters of the Historical Society of Michigan.

WCHS members and guests gathered on the shady lawn on a hot, humid September Sunday for a welcoming talk by Tom Jones, HSM executive director, before touring the house that still contains many Tuomy family antique furnishings.

Cornelius L. Tuomy married Julia Ann Kearney (pronounced Carney) of Northfield township and they raised three children there—Cornelius William (commonly called Bill), Catherine and Thomas.

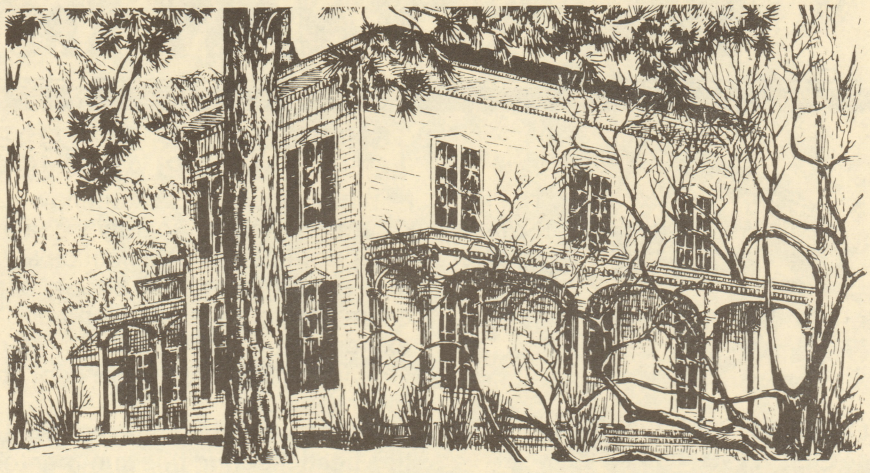
Bill and his sister lived in the house their entire lives. They together ran a real estate company called Tuomy & Tuomy mainly to develop their own land. Tuomy Road and Kearney Street commemorate the family.

The large structure with ornamental Italianate brackets under the roof was attached in front of the small, older house sometime in the 1880's.

Architect Dave Evans who helped HSM prepare its master plan estimated the small, older house was probably built about 1850, based on the timbering in the basement.

The 1874 Washtenaw County atlas lists Fred A. Spalding as owner of the property in Section 34 of Ann Arbor township. The elder Tuomy bought it soon after.

The present HSM reception area in the older part is entered from the north side. The original entrance was on the opposite side with a porch which was enclosed to expand the inside. The original entrance door on the south side with side light windows, all painted over, is visible inside.



Pictures courtesy of HSM

TUOMY HOUSE, CA. 1880

In 1930, the younger Tuomys built the picturesque fieldstone Tuomy Hills gas station down the road at the junction of Washtenaw and the "cutoff" (Stadium Boulevard).

A lot of people don't realize that the rather plain, non-descript little building just this side of the gas station, now painted brown, was their office, Jones said. Bill also served as Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner in the 1930's.

Catherine Tuomy died in the early 1960's and Bill in 1966. He left disposition of the house in the hands of his executor and good friend, Roscoe Bonisteel, an attorney and University of Michigan regent.

Bonisteel was also a director of the Historical Society of Michigan. He knew the society was looking for appropriate statewide headquarters, not necessarily in Lansing, so he offerred HSM the opportunity to move to Ann Arbor.

He worked out an arrangement whereby Tuomy House became U-M property in 1968. HSM moved in in January 1969. Soon after the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters, also a non-profit, membership-supported organization, approached HSM and have since been co-tenants.

Around the time Jones was appointed director in March 1980, the U-M indicated it wanted to divest itself of the property. Its budget for maintenance was being cut back severely. With 200-plus other buildings to care for, this was low priority.

HSM decided to take over ownership and proposed to the regents in April 1982 that they donate the property—the house with its contents and two acres surrounding it. The regents agreed.

HSM developed a master rehabilitation plan and is in process of implementing it. The first step was to insulate the house. Some HSM heating bills were in the $700 a month range.

The front porch has been rebuilt, the back porch railings reconstructed and the exterior painted.

Pointing to a perceptible sag on the north side of the house, Jones said they thought they had serious foundation problems.

It turned out to be only in the floor. In the 1880's when they built the front part of the house, contrary to the most rudimentary construction principles, they installed two chimneys in the walls with no foundations. They sit directly on the floor. The floor is sagging under the 2,000-3,000 pounds weight.

HSM learned this by going through the basement into the crawl space under the front part of the house. They will have to build new foundations under the chimneys to relieve the weight on the floors. Much to their relief, the house itself has good footings at least six feet deep.

Inside, the two front parlors each have attractive mantel pieces over fireplaces served by those chimneys.

While the house was being insulated, siding was torn off and they found where doors and windows had been covered over in earlier remodelings. They also found raccoons.

When the house was left over the weekend with some siding off, mother raccoon decided to move her babies into the walls, nice and snug.

When the insulators came back Monday to blow in the rest of the insulation, mother raccoon was out somewhere and the babies were forced into an area above the porch.

The insulators sealed up the siding and went on their way. Suddenly, we heard this racket and here were the babies, having dug through one of the pieces of wood in the ceiling of the porch, yelping for mother who was upon the roof tearing apart shingles trying to get at her babies.

"We were literally trapped in the house because mother raccoon was scrambling up and down the porch pillars and actually leaned up into this doorway, yelling at us. It was an incredible sight."

CITY LIMITS, TRAFFIC DO NOT DETER WILDLIFE (THE FOUR-FOOTED KIND)

Not all the wild life in Ann Arbor emanates from campus. When the Historical Society of Michigan had the Tuomy House insulated, they dislodged a family of raccoons that had been living under the house.

They also have a family of woodchucks and a few 'possums. "I have become very adept at capturing the little critters, live of course, then letting them go in the field in outregions of the city," Tom Jones, HSM executive director, said.

"The 'possums are easy to capture. They're kind of dumb. They walk into a trap. I've carried off four or five.

"We are trying to get rid of the woodchucks. They are a little wily and hard to capture."

'(For more details of the raccoon crisis, see main article).

At one point, when mother raccoon was up on the chimney watching, Jones grabbed a big shovel, ripped off a board to open the way and he and the staff left the house.

The babies climbed out and they have not been seen since. "Some day, if we seal the openings in the foundation, we'll get rid of the little critters, but that takes money and we have some higher priorities."

HSM plans to maintain its statewide headquarters here and restore

Piano in north parlor at Tuomy House. Portrait believed to be young Bill or Thomas Tuomy.

the house. Although they do not plan to make it a house museum, they plan to keep the furnishings intact and hope to restore some that need work.

They also plan to create a tenant space in the back of the house where the tenants can have their own separate entrance. The tenants now occupy the second floor.

HSM also plans to maintain the two acre grounds as "our little green oasis amidst the hustle and bustle of Washtenaw Avenue."

"People who know more about trees than I tell me that there are about 19 different types on the site."

Before winter, HSM plans to have extensive work done on the trees—pruning, spraying and injection to maintain them as well as removal of dead trees.

HSM is a non-profit organization supported entirely by the membership. Jones appealed for volunteers to help make the grounds more attractive and others to better inventory and evaluate the antiques in the house.

Inside the house, Jones pointed out the receptionist's desk sits on what was once a porch. The ceilings are much higher in the front part of the house and woodwork somewhat more elaborate.

The front part has two front parlors on the main floor and a double door entrance-way flanked by windows with red, yellow and clear glass. The master plan calls for that to become the main entrance to HSM offices instead of the side entrance, typical of farm houses.

Upstairs there are four bedrooms and sitting room in the front part plus a larger bedroom with plank floor above the older part.

HSM "has tried to be as polite to the historical furniture as it can," Jones said. "The matched set of rococo Victorian furniture in the north parlor is probably the prize of the collection," he noted. They are not used, only displayed.

Other furniture includes dressers, wash stands, marble top tables, a swinging cradle, a piano, and a hall piece with mirror and marble top shelf and drawer called "rennaisance revival" style by Gary Kuehnle, an antique appraiser who is WCHS's new collections chairman.

About the time Jones was appointed director, a barn at the back of the parking lot was torn down because U-M thought it was a safety hazard.

FIRST U-M GAME ON TV GETS ASSIST BY TUOMY

The Tuomy property played an important role in televising the first football game ever televised from University of Michigan Stadium, Jones found.

In September 1947, then WWJ-TV owned by *The Detroit News* was to broadcast the game. This hill the house sits on is one of the highest in Ann Arbor and it blocked the signal from the stadium to the Penobscot Building in downtown Detroit where the broadcast studios were.

The station asked permission of Mr. Tuomy to erect a cone on top of a windmill which stood just behind the house. The signal from the stadium was bounced off that cone and transmitted to Detroit.

During the 1947 season the cone was on the windmill and technical equipment in the barn. As near as they can find, that was the only season that technique was used. By the following year, telecommunications apparently had improved.

By the way, Jones noted, "U-M beat Michigan State 55-0 in that first televised U-M game."

WCHS had some things stored in it which were moved to Barton Powerhouse and eventually to Willow Run, except the large old-fashioned carriage which the Tuomy's used to use in a Christmas display in their front yard. Too large for our regular storage, it is stored by a WCHS member.

Among the buildings on former Tuomy property are Tappan Junior

High School and the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church complex. The Tuomy's gave the church site and willed a substantial amount of money to the church.

What became the Stage Stop Motel on Carpenter Road just south of Washtenaw would have been built near Washtenaw and Stadium, Jones has heard, if the owners could have persuaded the Tuomys to sell them a site.

It seems the Tuomys wanted no multiple dwellings of any kind and they didn't think much of motels, in particular.

The Tuomys still had farm animals grazing their lands when people moved onto Tuomy Road in the 1950's. WCHS member Lawrence Ziegler remembers seeing several sheep including a black one there, helping keep the grass in trim.

MANCHESTER NAMES PARR

Howard Parr was recently elected president of the Manchester Historical Society. Florence Parr, his sister-in-law, is first vice-president; Ann Fowler, second vice-president; Betty Cummings, secretary; and Loring Ebersole, treasurer.

John Swainson, immediate past-president; Tom Walton and Gail Kellum compose the rest of the board. Former Governor Swainson is now serving on the state historical commission and is co-chairman of the Michigan sesquicentennial to be celebrated in 1907.

1985-86 SCHEDULE WCHS MEETINGS

Thursday, October 17, 1985, 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 14, 1985, 6:30 p.m., fall potluck, Christian Reformed Church on Broadway.

Sunday, December 8, 1985, 2:30 p.m. Clements Library, Christmas reception.

Sunday, March 9, 1986, 2:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 17, 1986, 2:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 21, 1986, 6:30 p.m., spring potluck, annual meeting.

Saturday, June 14, 1986, annual tour.

Please note variety of days and times and mark your calendar.

Meetings at American Legion unless otherwise noted.

GOVERNOR CASS, SCHOOLCRAFT STARTED HSM IN 1828

The origins of the Historical Society of Michigan which now has its headquarters in Ann Arbor's Tuomy House date back to 1828.

As part of an effort to bring culture and refinement to this wilderness, Territorial Governor Cass and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, founded what they called the Pioneer and Historical Society, Tom Jones, HSM executive director, said. It existed for about twenty years, then died out. (The original name was re-adopted in 1949).

With enthusiasm for America's approaching centennial, a statewide meeting was held in Lansing in 1874 to reorganize the society. "We continue that tradition—our 1985 annual meeting will be our 111th consecutive meeting," Jones said.

From 1874 until the mid-teens, even though it was not state supported, the Society was the official repository for state records and artifacts and the official agency for state history.

About 1913, a state historical commission was created to take over those responsibilities. The society continued as a membership-supported organization, co-existing with the commission until 1962.

When the new state constitution was written in 1962, the commission was subsumed under the much larger department of state.

At that time, society trustees decided it would be best for history if there were two distinct organizations. Around 1963-64 the society moved out of commission offices, rented office space in Lansing, and hired an executive director.

"I am the fifth executive director in about 20 or 21 years," Jones said. The magazine, *The Chronicle,* now in its 21st year, was inaugurated.

Our relationship with the state historical commission is still very strong but we both have our separate programs and objectives.

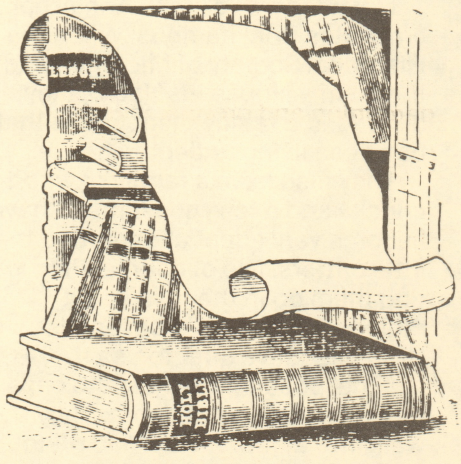
The state can run the archives in Lansing and the new museum building and library that is proposed to be built in the next couple of years. They can also administer money for historic preservation projects around Michigan.

"We concentrate ourselves on publications and on service to local historical societies. Many need help with their organization or to get started."

"We also have a centennial business program honoring those in business for a hundred years or more, and another awards program that draws attention to individuals in groups who have taken extraordinary steps to preserve the state's history."

A program honoring excellence in teaching Michigan history was started in 1983.

(Washtenaw's pioneer Judge Samuel W. Dexter was a charter member of the original HSM).



ARCHIVIST TO SPEAK

Dave Johnson of the state archives will speak on "Records in the Archives of Use to Genealogists" at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, October 27, in Hale Auditorium of the U-M School of Business, Tappan and Hill Streets.

Karen Walker is GSWC president; Don Callard, first vice-president; Pat Fluharty, second vice-president; Thada Liskow, treasurer; Helen Graham, recording secretary; Dorothy Siano, corresponding secretary; and Cathy Doherty, librarian.

Board members at large are Carolyn Griffin, Richard Miller, Bruce Nelson and Rob Steward.

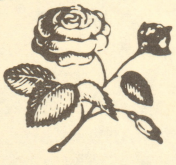
OLD FASHIONED GARDEN: IT WAS LILAC OVER YEW AND BARE FOUNDATIONS

Perhaps you've wondered why the 1844 Cobblestone Farm house on Packard Road which is being restored looks so bare around the foundation.

It looks that way on purpose, Scott Kunst, a specialist on old house gardens, explained at a recent illustrated talk to the Chelsea Historical Society to which WCHS had a special invitation.

"A relatively bare foundation is perhaps the key visual difference between modern and nineteenth century landscapes," he says.

They spotted things about, favored lilacs over yews and used old non-hybrid varieties and plants valued for fragrance as much as appearance.



"The 'open center' plan with broad green lawn is twentieth century, as are rock gardens, shade gardening and ground covers."

"Almost every nineteenth century house had a fence." He showed examples of fences from picket and board to fancy cast iron including that around the Davenport house in Saline.

"Urns, statues, fountains, arbors, sun dials, birdhouses, furniture and gazebos were popular with Victorians."

Geometric gardens were from England. Andrew Jackson Downing popularized non-geometric gardens used 1850-1880. Late Victorian carpet bedding (1870-1910) can still be seen in parks. The English cottage garden or mixed perennial border was popular 1900-1930.

JERUSALEM NOT AS FAR AWAY AS YOU THOUGHT, COUNTY HISTORIC COMMISSION MARKS SITE

Did you know that you can go to Jerusalem and still be in Washtenaw County?

Jerusalem was a millsite in Lima township. The Washtenaw County Historic District Commission recently dedicated a historic marker there. The mill was on Mill Creek at Fletcher Road near Haist Road in Section 29, about a half mile south of Jerusalem Road.

The marker says:

"John K. Bingham dammed Mill Creek near this site and built a sawmill in 1831-32. His dam provided power for 99 years. The mill was expanded to include grist milling in 1860 and cider pressing before 1900.

Since its founding the hamlet has been called Bingham's, Porter's, Porterville, Mill Dell and Jerusalem."

WCHDC previously marked Geddes at Dixboro Road and the Huron River, St. John's Lutheran Church in Northfield township, and presented a marker to the 150-year-old Ypsilanti Friends Church.

They plan to present one to Lincoln Consolidated School this month and hope to put smaller markers on the 11 or so one-room schools or schoolsites from which the district was formed in southeast Washtenaw county.

MANCHESTER PRESERVING HISTORY LIVE & IN COLOR

Manchester Historical Society is preserving its history live and in color on video tape nowadays.

Since 1983, when they dedicated the blacksmith shop museum, they have made a 40-minute tape of highlights of the year's activities in the community, such as the chicken broil, fair, parades and July 4th celebrations.

The 1985 tape will include scenes of Main Street when it was used as the set of a recent movie and the recent dedication of a refurbished senior center, Howard Parr, society president said.

They are also making 30-minute taped interviews with local small industries.

They hire a local technician to "shoot" the tapes. They have a stereo system installed out of sight in the back room at the museum and a 37-inch screen to show the tapes.

They are using the VHS system which seems to be becoming the standard of the industry. They hope the magnetic tape will be more lasting than color film. They plan to store a master tape in ideal conditions and show a working copy. They have even sold some duplicate tapes on request.

DEXTER OFFICERS NAMED

Ann Nuttle has been re-elected president of the Dexter Historical Society. Other offiers are Alice Pastalan, vice-president; Hazel Kaufman, secretary; Nancy Walker, treasurer; and Rose Van Aken, corresponding secretary.

Others on the board are Wallace Fusilier and area representatives Bruce Waggoner, Dexter village; Ethel Samuelson, schools; Earl Doletzky, Dexter township; Dorothy Beach, Lima; Charles Steinbach, Scio; and Wana Baldus, Webster.

Lorraine Govaere and Joanne Hoeft were elected to the museum board of which Margaret Guenther is secretary.

Should Washtenaw County Historical Society appoint a museum/office/home committee to actively explore possibilities and propose a plan?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Comments _____

_____

Name (optional) _____

Please clip and send to WCHS, c/o Kempf House, 312 South Division, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, or bring to November 14 meeting.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS INVOLVE.
QUILT DRAWING, CORN, DINNERS, ONE-ROOM SCHOOL, TOWN HALL, BUTTONS

Chelsea Historical Society: Meets 7:30 p.m. second Monday at Crippen Building at Chelsea Methodist Home. Chelsea Fair queen invited to draw winning ticket on quilt the society made at October 14 meeting.

November 11, elect officers. Martin and Alene Steinbach to show pictures of their trip to Scandinavia in search of Alene's Swedish roots.

Dexter Historical Society: Museum, 3443 Inverness, will be open 1-4 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays until Christmas. Museum gift shop will be open 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Saturday (side door, off parking lot).

Manchester Historical Society: Reno Feldkamp, local seed corn distributor, will talk about uses and importance of corn through the years at 7:30 p.m. Monday, October 21, at the Blacksmith Shop, 324 East Main.

Milan Historical Society: Harvest dinner planned for the membership Wednesday, October 16. Tom Jones, executive director of the Historical Society of Michigan, spoke at the September meeting.

Billie Jean Thornton, publicity chairman, would like to see an annual get together of all area local societies to exchange ideas, perhaps a potluck meal, with societies taking turns as hosts. If interested, she'd like to hear from you at Milan 439-2260.

Tom Hennings, EMU English professor, is main author of the 225-page book with 100 pictures. Chapters on natural history and agriculture are by Mike Krebill and Rusty Towers, co-president, respectively.

Their campaign to raise money for publication got a boost with a grant from the township board.

Their summer picnic at Independence Lake Park was so successful they hope to make it an annual affair.

Salem Historical Society: Meets 7 p.m. last Thursday of month at Salem Elementary School in cold months, otherwise at South Salem Stone School, North Territorial at Curtis Roads, which the society is continuing to restore, President Irene Lyke said.

They held a benefit auction at the school October 5, another in a series of money raising projects.

Superior Township Historical Committee: The eight-member committee under Chairman Peggy Haines is continuing its effort to get the old town hall, now at a gravel pit, moved back near the present town hall on Cherry Hill Road near Prospect. Extra land for the site has been obtained, they have met with an architect, and are now awaiting approval of their plans by the township board.

Webster Historical Society: Meets 7:45 p.m. first Monday at Webster Community House or at member homes.

The Society is selling reproductions of early Milan postcard scenes, eight for $1. Its two books, *Ancient and Modern Milan,* $10, and *Cook It Like It Was* cookbook, $6.50, may be ordered by sending those amounts plus $1 postage and handling to MHS, Hack House, 775 County Street, Milan, MI 48160.

Northfield Historical Society: The Society plans to introduce *Looking Back: History of Northfield Township and Whitmore Lake Area,* two-and-a-half years in preparation at the 7:30 p.m. potluck meeting, Monday, November 10th, place to be announced. Call Rusty Towers, co-president, 665-8077 evenings for place.

Ypsilanti Historical Society: The Society will celebrate its 25th anniversary at the fall beef dinner at 5 p.m. Sunday, November 3, at the Masonic Temple, and the following week as Ypsilanti History Week.

The dinner is open to the public. Reservations, $6.50 per person, may be made by telephoning the museum, mornings, 482-4990.

Museum, 220 North Huron, open 2-4 p.m. Friday-Sunday. October special exhibit features buttons.

Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-8826
Mailing: Lucy Kooperman, 668-7174
Published September to May except January and February

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORIAL SOCIETY MEETING

7:30 P.M. THURSDAY OCTOBER 17, 1985

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